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An Amazingly Brilliant Thing

by Susan Buhlman

You are dying.

You are aware that your life on Earth will shortly come to its close. You are feeling the deep and complex emotions that naturally arise—fear, of course, and anxiety, grief; perhaps anger, as well as curiosity; even excitement. And a poignant love for all that you may miss—family, friends, beloved animals who have walked the path with you, the beauty and grandeur of this planet you call home.

You wonder, “am I prepared?” Are my affairs in order? What will happen to my children? Have I been a good enough person? Where will I go? Will I reunite with my deceased relatives? Do I even want to? Is this the end?

It can sometimes be difficult to discuss these heartfelt issues with those closest to you. They are absorbed in managing the details of your care. Perhaps they resist death talk because it makes your imminent departure too real. Or perhaps you don’t feel comfortable “burdening” them with your concerns.



Susan Buhlman is a Reiki Master, hospice volunteer, and a certified end-of-life doula. It is her passion and her soul's purpose to provide comfort to those who are actively dying. As an end-of-life doula Susan is a companion to those in the final hours or days of life. She offers a calming, compassionate presence and, if the patient is open to it, Susan guides him or her through a transitional preparation process.

When entering the room of a dying person, she puts up a protective shield with Reiki to preserve the peace of the space. “There is a definite feeling in the room before and after the

physical death,” Susan explains. “I can sense the presence of those who are there to visit the patient, or who have just passed.”

“It’s nice to be able to sit with someone over several weeks. When they are actively dying you can feel the energy in the room and help them with affirmations, music, etc., to provide peace and safety. It is an amazingly brilliant thing.”

What about when patients ask the tough questions or are experiencing spiritual crisis? As all doulas are trained to do, Susan uses language that is fitting and comfortable within the family philosophy or religion. Affirmations, which can gently help the patient to connect with source, may be, *You are safe and secure, surrounded by love*, or *You joyfully go to the clear light of your source*.

Susan recommends end-of-life preparations as a spiritual practice for everyone, “It would be nice if we do this before we are taking our last breath.”

It’s very difficult when someone you love is dying. “To have a doula sit with you, who brings a sense of calm to the family, is a tremendous benefit for the patient and caregivers.”

What if there’s no time to prepare? “Even in the case of sudden death we can help with the transition. Suicide, for example, is an emotionally draining experience. When loved ones are able to set their personal emotional needs aside for the moment and enter into prayer or communion with the dead person—to send them acceptance and love—this supports their transition in a powerful way.”

Susan co-trains with her husband William Buhlman, the Destination: Higher Self workshop at TMI. The program guides participants to develop their own Spiritual Advanced Directive, learn the practices of an end-of-life coach, and experience techniques that will clear the way for them to achieve escape velocity from the dimensions of density and form.

Susan’s doula work is part of a burgeoning field of end-of-life mental, emotional, and spiritual care. According to an article in the January 23rd *New York Times*, “Doulas, Who Usher in New Life, Find Mission in Support for the Dying”:

The word doula, Greek for “woman who serves,” is usually associated with those who assist in childbirth. But increasingly, doulas are helping people with leaving the world as well.

...The concept is not completely new; hospices have long had “vigil volunteers” who sit by the bedsides of the dying, but it has now expanded far beyond that.